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UNCLAS HARARE 001927

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION WSSD; HARARE

¶1. Under headline "Zim must stand its ground at summit" the independent weekly "The Business Tribune" dedicated its August 22 editorial to encouraging Zimbabwe to advance its controversial land redistribution program at the forthcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa. Excerpts:

¶2. "...The upcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg. What does it mean for Zimbabwe? What should Zimbabwe, and indeed Africa, expect from the summit? That it will be one of the largest and most important international meetings Africa has hosted is not in doubt. . . . For Zimbabwe, this summit, more than any other, presents many challenges. These include the ongoing land reform program and the environmental concerns that it implies. Already many observers and conference organizers are concerned the Zimbabwe contagion may derail the summit. If Zimbabwe is not on the agenda it surely will be put at the center stage not only because the premise on which the land reform is being conducted challenges the agenda of the developing countries. . . . The summit thus provides a platform for the condemnation of land reform and the food problem that has now been conveniently associated with it. Any country that attempts to identify with Zimbabwe will also face the wrath of the international community. So any Zimbabwean delegates, particularly those representing the government, will have to endure being sidelined and ridiculed. . . . Zimbabwe cannot be integrated into the world economy when it is pursuing policies that undermine the foundation of modern-day capitalism.

"...U.S. President George W. Bush's millennium challenge account that seeks to increase conditional development assistance best describes the attitudes of the developed world to Africa. AGOA and NEPAD are similar initiatives that rely on partnerships and unfettered markets as the sine qua non for development. The impact of corporate greed so much evident in the U.S. on the lives of ordinary citizens will surely be ignored. The thrust will certainly be driven by corporates, particularly those from developed countries who have seen these summits as a convenient platform to advance their selfish and parochial interests. Already the composition of the delegates is mostly non-African, with Africans, in a demonstration of their world-renowned inability to pay for their own costs without donor support, missing at the summit. The fact that the summit is being held in Africa but the majority of delegates will be advancing non-African values is just another example of what can be expected when Zimbabwe and Africa in general have not put their house in order."

SULLIVAN